

"SOUNDTRACKS TO FORGOTTEN SCENES OF THE PAST..."

SURRENDER TO A STRICT FORMULA, BUT INSTEAD CONSTANTLY PROVOKE ITS PEERS. AS SOON AS THE SOUND IS CONSTRAINED, IT HAS DEFEATED ITSELF.

In my opinion, if punk is to flourish in the Western world, it must constantly search, break and build itself over again. The punk scene must not surrender to a strict formula, but instead constantly provoke its peers. As soon as the sound is constrained, it has defeated itself.

the time or money to promote active bands. I'm maintaining a very high standard of recording, restoration, graphic design, written information, printing and pressing. The label is not profit-making, but simply a passion. It takes a long time to complete each release because I am very meticulous in gathering complete information, only using original images and recordings, and travelling to meet the musicians.

MRR: One of the most successful editions on your previous label was *Neos Fight With Donald*. When did you discover this crazy band?

Fight With Donald was what made me realize I was good at creating archival releases. I discovered the Neos at age fourteen when doing a radio show on CFUV 101.9 FM. They're from Victoria and one of the pioneers of hardcore. I met Steve (guitar) as a teenager when I did *Death* fanzine, and a few years later, Key (bass) invited me to sing for a band he was forming using the same model as Neos—fast, short songs. The band was Mexican Power Authority.

Neos played their last show in 1983 and then continued with a studio project called Harvest of Seaweed. There was another group similar to Neos called Jerk Ward. Key started up Sludge Confrontations with their drummer. Later, Jerk Ward mutated into a band called Mission of Christ and Key joined them. I saw M.O.C. play many times. They signed to Metal Blade but never recorded or released an album. Neos material has been bootlegged a lot, and I have procrastinated reissuing it, but one day I will do a LP of their EPs and melodic unreleased material originally written for a LP in 1983.

MRR: Do you remember the first record

do a historical research project. I believe it was that school program that spearheaded my eventual desire to become an archivist.

MRR: What is the main idea of your label?

The main purpose of Supreme Echo is to document little known and forgotten music groups from a few specific regions of the world which I am most fascinated with, as well as from Canada, which is where I am from—so far, the former Socialist Republic of Poland, the Republic of Georgia, rural Columbia. All my releases are 100% authorized based on visiting and working directly with the artists.

MRR: Before Supreme Echo you had the label Break Even and released many records. Are there differences between these two labels?

Yes, everything is different. Break Even was originally a label to represent my friends' groups that I recorded in my basement. I started recording bands in 1988, and in 1989, I began to help produce cassette and vinyl in small quantities. These releases were in fact self-financed by each individual group, which all agreed to the Break Even label slogan simply to further legitimize their product and its promotion. It allowed many local bands to create the illusion of being on a label, and it helped promote them internationally. Some notable musicians I recorded later went on to be in such groups as Submission Hold, 3 Inches of Blood, Ghosts, Kinzie Starr and Hot Hot Heat. From 1989 to 1998, Break Even helped create a total of roughly 70 individual releases on vinyl, cassette and CD.

Supreme Echo creates archival documents; no modern groups. I don't have

Supreme Echo is a music label from Canada that defines itself as "Extraordinary Music Archives." The man behind it is Jason Flower, a musician and music freak who is into many genres of music. We met two times: first in Wrocław, Poland at a DIY punk music festival and second in the Slovakian mountains. Jason is great guy and absolutely loves talking about music, so we spent our time that way. He is interested mainly in Eastern European punk, metal, new wave, as well as jazz and many other styles. Interview and introduction by Miso Kratochvíl, 2009 and 2014. Photos provided by Jason Flower.

MRR: Hello Jason, introduce yourself a little bit...where did you get your passion for music? Were there any musicians in your family?

I've been writing, recording, archiving, producing, and playing music since 1984. I grew up listening to my parents' 60s and 70s rock LPs and my neighbors' heavy metal records. My grandfather in Australia played violin, my uncle in Canada played guitar...but the only real artist is my estranged uncle Geoffrey Degroen in Australia. He is a famous painter.

The passion for music came from escapism; daydreaming of far away sounds and places. My parents met in Europe when travelling. Both always spoke about it as the greatest experience in life. I felt and feel the same. I say "escapism" because I was never content with my home surroundings or expectations others put on me, and felt different from the people around me. At age ten I began to strongly embrace the music I was growing up with: Kiss, AC/DC, Joan Jett, Black Sabbath, Quiet Riot, and a lot of '80s punk groups. I was enrolled in a special program at school called "enrichment" that gave me the chance to

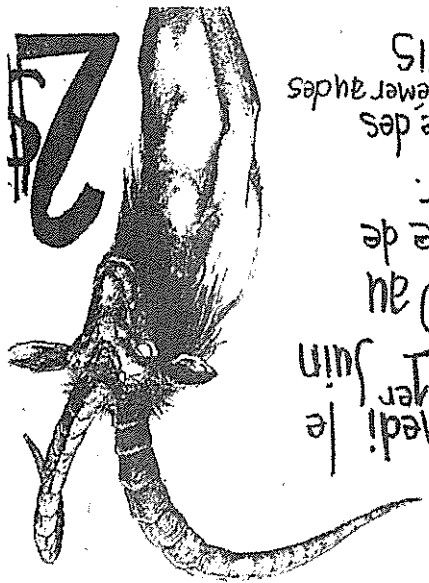
MRR: When did you first travel to Europe, and which

countries did you visit?
In 1997, I toured Europe with Martin Valasek and Battle of Disarm. Between 1997 and 2007, I visited the UK, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Czech Republic, Poland, Holland, Lithuania, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Georgia, and India...to date, over 30 countries.

MRR: What was the reason that you settled in Poland?
I was always fascinated with Poland since I was a kid; the language and the contemporary music of the '80s (punk, metal, jazz, rock). I used to drink Polish Inka coffee as a teen and write to metalheads and punks when it was still a communist country. I wanted the challenge of culture shock because Canada and Switzerland, where I lived for two years, were too easy and void of any magic. Poland was hard, but the people had spark and passion. I met the right people from Wrocław and knew it instinctively, so I moved there and soon after met a woman and miraculously fell in love.

MRR: What was your impression of Europe, the people in the punk scene? How did you feel about the scene in the Czech Republic during the other half of the '90s? What about India? In 1997 did you find any punk or metal bands in India?
When I first came to Europe in 1997, it was very exciting for me. Mexican Power Authority had pockets of fans everywhere, and I was meeting a lot of old pen pals. I love how culturally diverse Europe is, and the architecture is exactly what an aesthetically sensitive person like myself thrives on. The Czech scene was great. There were a lot of groups I loved...Mrtva Budoucnost was a favorite at the time. I also loved the jazz-punk scene, metal, rock, psych, jazz and others; however, I grew out of much of it and now only hold onto the music that is connected to sentiment. India? Amazing. It changed my life...six months, North to South, West to East, Andaman and Nicobar, Sikkim...yes, I bought over 50 cassettes and found two heavy metal tapes—Millennium from Bangalore, and the Crisis from Nepal.

MRR: How did you discover Polish alternative music in Canada in the '80s? Can you mention a few bands that fascinated you?
In 1987, I saw a documentary program on the Polish jazz scene, and the same year I bought a cassette bootleg made by the US label Media Blitz of the Tonpress various artist LP *Jak Punk to Punk* with the Corpse demo '88 added to the end of it. Soon after, I began writing to punks and metalheads in Poland. *Eternal Torment* zine was amazing, still one of the best from that era. Back in the '80s I loved *Rejestracja*, *Separator*, *Wilczy Pająk*, *Siekiera*, *Dezenter*, *Abaddon*, *HCP*, *Process*, *TZN Xenna*, *Imperator*, *Schizmopathic*, *Po Prostu*, everywhere in the world.



Mexican Power Authority
de Victoria

Samed! le
Jermain
8h30 au
local de
Drift.
102 rue des
Emeraudes
LEVIS



you ever bought?
They were speed and death metal cassettes on Banzai Records, such as *Venom* and *Metallica* in 1984. The first mail order LP was *Manslayer* by Thrash Queen (1985), an all-women feminist metal group. Some critics consider it one of the worst metal LPs ever made, but I like it! The first local demo I bought was *Armors Debut Assault* (1986). Thereafter, I began to buy all the local punk and hardcore demos and correspond with punks and metalheads all over the world via tape trading, and I also wrote about them in my fanzine.

MRR: When did you discover indie music?
I knew a local heavy metal group called *Intruder* when I was eleven but had already seen rock bands when I was a kid. My friend Jeremy, whom I've known since birth and played with in *Stick Farm* (1989-91) had grown up seeing *Nomansno* as a child...such things happened here. I suppose my true consciousness of differentiating between independent and commercial music was in 1983 when I started to go to music shops, but I was very young, and it wasn't until 1986 that I began to collect local music.

MRR: When did you begin to travel for music and bands?
I was about 20 when I began to feel very empty and unsatisfied in Victoria, so that was 1993. I still feel unsatisfied with familiarity and more comfortable in environments where I'm truly the outsider. The only solution to this disease is to daydream, travel and make archival records. I began to visit my pen pals, toured with *Insult to Injury*, the group before *Submission* held. Later, I toured Canada with my groups *MPA* and *Third World Planet*. I will always travel and search for music everywhere in the world.



Slashing Death, and many more.

MRR: Then you set about mapping the Georgian underground. The first thing was CD of post-punk band Retsepti, and I know that now you are preparing records of other old Georgian punk / metal / rock bands on vinyl. What is so fascinating to you about Georgian music?

MRR: OK, let's talk about your first release on Supreme Echo, a Polish punk compilation called *Victim of Safety Pin*. How did it go with old punks and band members, and what was their response to the issue of their old stuff on vinyl? When *Victim of Safety Pin* was initiated, there had not yet been a boom of Polish punk reissues, and nobody had touched the original era from 1977 to 1982. It was impressive to the musicians that I was Canadian, and when I said it would be vinyl only, they immediately and eagerly agreed. Everyone was quite receptive. Only Zykzak from TZN Xenna was skeptical, but that quickly changed when we met. He turned out to be one of the most personable of them all. Robal from Dezerter met with me many times... Magura (Deadlock / Kryzys) and I still keep in contact with each other. For me, the most magical moment was the response of Tomek Lipinski (from Tilt); his words, smile and look in his eyes shined all over me. I felt proud.

MRR: How did you contact punks in Georgia?

that unfortunately has known conflict and war. However it is also an ancient region rich in diversity, colors, wonderful food, polyphonic singing, beautiful architecture, geography and other things, all due to the bold character of its people. I'm planning a compilation LP on the '80s-'90s scene, titled *Qartveli Rokerebi*, with eight to ten groups, but it will take a long time to complete. In the meantime I've become friends with many of those old musicians: Gogi, the singer of Mortur, Zviadi from Komendatis Saati, Lado from Retsepti, Levan from Mdzime Jvari, Robi from Outsider and many others. I have collected a large amount of Georgian folk, funk, psych, beat, jazz, punk, rap, metal, and more. Georgian singing is incredible, and their traditional styles are heard in most contemporary music. Ironically, their tradition is not strongly featured in much of the punk and metal, but you still have that unique and beautiful Qartuli language, and the groups that will be on the various artists LP are very special.

MRR: What is the punk scene in Georgia like today compared to the '80s?

After the first contacts, it was just a case of my own investigation of gathering names, obsessing over the chronology of the Tbilisi alternative music scene and ignoring gossip so that I could include as many groups and people as possible and befriend them. I give credit to my ex-wife Anna Fuszara who studied cultural anthropology. She helped greatly with the massive archiving and interview process that was undertaken.

then took us to the conservatory where we immediately met musicians. His name was Dj Temo, and he was able to take us right to Lado Burduli. Lado and I kept in touch, and after six years of very hard work, the original Retsepti masters were restored and I pried an interview out of him to create the CD. It had always been planned as a LP, however he kept insisting on CD because he held the format with prestige (and ego!). I have authorization for a reissue on LP. Lado then introduced us to many local comrades but also his rivals. We were connected to the Kutaisi punks as well, which was a city with a totally different scene and at one point very vibrant. Kutaisi is where Outsider came from. They were the sole Georgian group to have a LP released... good luck finding it.

MRR: You mentioned Lasha Gabunia, an old punk from Kutaisi and a music critic promoting Georgian alternative music. How did you meet him?

Lado connected me to Lasha, and we became good friends. He's a great person and completely passionate about music. Lasha had a TV show in the chaotic early 1990s in Kutaisi when the scene was booming with Outsider at the forefront. As a music critic, he had no choice but to graduate to a larger city to survive using his expertise. Lasha is the main media historian of the Georgian underground.

MRR: What is the punk scene in Georgia like today compared to the '80s?

playing hard'n'heavy music influenced by Black Sabbath...

There is a history of Inuit rock in Greenland, Yakutia and Northern Canada. Canada had rock groups starting in the early 1970s when radio and television were introduced. One of the oldest Inuit rock groups is Sugluk. They played garage style. Northern Haze were something special. They took the music to a higher level of composition. They were born on the land to Nomadic parents and later settled in the hamlet community of Igloodik. As childhood friends, they grew up learning to play on toy instruments until becoming accomplished musicians and forming a group in 1977. Their talent won success in the early '80s with contests, press coverage and tours of isolated Northern communities until '85, when CBC Radio invited them to travel 3,000 km (1,865 miles) south to record an album. The result became the first Canadian Inuit rock/metal language rock album in North America. Through the '90s and into the millennium, Northern Haze endured great hardship yet 35+ years on, they still prevail. In 2010, a new recording and a documentary film on the history of the group was produced on location in the Arctic. I flew up there and spent three weeks in the Arctic with them.

MRR: What about feedback about your archival work?

Based on the depth and detail of the booklets that each release has, I've received praise and positivity from both critics and consumers alike. When one archive is a success and the musicians are pleased with the overall project results, it often acts as a passport towards other groups of the same scene that I may wish to release.

MRR: Talk briefly about your releases and future plans.

MRR: What are the criteria for choosing the bands you want to release?
It's a matter of documenting something that, in my opinion, nobody else has yet done. The Canadian proto-punk and proto-metal 45s on Supreme Echo exist because we can now look back retrospectively and rediscover them. Psych from Azerbaijan, Inuit doom, Qartul Punk, etc...Supreme Echo archives are soundtracks to forgotten scenes of the past.

Out now:
VA--Victim of Safety Pin Polish Punk Underground 1977-82 LP, Polish punk, new wave, hardcore, folk.
Retsepti--Anthology of Georgian Underground, Tbilisi 1987-92 CD, Georgian post punk, dark wave, NWOBHM.

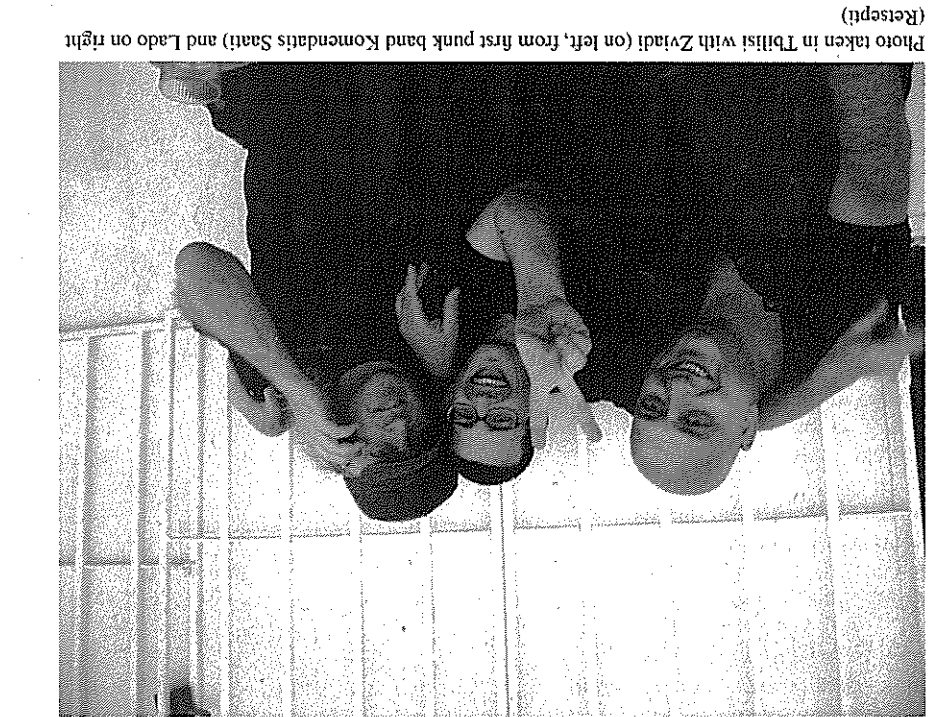


Photo taken in Tbilisi with Zviadi (on left, from first punk band Komendatis Saati) and Lado on right (Retsepti)

face exposure, people create their own hybrid interpretation of styles and fads, but Georgia has incredibly strong self-character added in.

MRR: Did you visit some record shops, clubs or venues there?

There were no record shops, but my friend was planning to open a cafe/bar with LPs in it. There are not many punk bands. It's more like a scattered scene of single groups from different genres: death metal, ska, alternative rock, traditional heavy metal, post punk/new wave, hip hop, electronic, punk rock...all make up the small Tbilisi underground.

MRR: What about punk gigs, zines/magazines or record labels?

There aren't many places in the region for groups to play. From Tbilisi, a group would probably only go to Kutaisi and Batumi in Georgia, and then perhaps Baku in Azerbaijan and Yerevan in Armenia. In each of the Caucasus countries there are only a few punk groups. If a group is very ambitious, they could go to Ankara and Istanbul in Turkey, but that's a big trip. Within Tbilisi there are some nice clubs for alternative music groups to play.

Retsepti's CD cover is from an old underground art zine...sure there must have been some old art and music zines but I don't know them. There is, or was, is a studio called Sano, but I don't think is an indie label called Bravo, and there are some culture magazines featuring modern groups.

MRR: Are you also looking for new bands or just old ones?

Retsepti's CD was very popular in Georgia, and Lado claims to have sold it for very high prices. Myself, I struggled to sell it because, despite the great reviews, CD is a dead format in the west. Fred from Darbouka Records (TAM 89 distributor) once said, "If it had been a LP, it would have sold out." I do plan to reissue it on LP. It's already authorized, and I have paid Lado royalties, so it's just a matter of it and when I choose to do it.

MRR: Tell us about your book project All Your Ears Can Hear: Underground Music in Victoria, BC 1978-84. How much time did it take, who worked on it and are you satisfied with the result?

It took five years to make. The main work was done by myself, Key Smith and Ricky Long. I am quite satisfied with the result, but regret that it did not include the following groups: Royal, Terry, Zipper, Lightstreams, The Shooz, Low Fun and a few more. The book was not intended to be exclusively "punk" but the editor cut some music out of it. We won the 2007 M-Award for "best non-fiction book in Victoria". It's an 80-page book with two CDs containing 79 songs by 46 bands.

MRR: The Northern Haze Sinnakug LP, where did those guys meet? There are probably not many Eskimo bands

There is a history of Inuit rock in Greenland, Yakutia and Northern Canada... Northern Haze were something special. They took the music to a higher level of composition. They were born on the land to Nomadic parents and later settled in the hamlet community of Igloodik. As childhood friends, they grew up learning to play on toy instruments until becoming accomplished musicians and forming a group in 1977.

Experiment OK LP, 1975. Azerbaijan a war-torn region that is full of instability, post-war trauma, corruption, drugs and Russian tourists...but interestingly, one evening after dinner we in fact saw an Abkhaz heavy metal group perform, and they did songs in Abkhazian. Very cool. To even imagine if there were "punks" there just seems naive and unrealistic, but there are people listening to punk music everywhere in the world, and Abkhazians are struggling to survive and rebuild their lives.

MRR: I know you like searching for records in street markets. What jewels did you find in the last few years?

Gunesh, Progressiv TM, Orhan, Zartong, YU Grupa, Vagif Mustafazade...the greatest pearls of my last trip in 2012.

MRR: I know that you love different kinds of music from different parts of the world. Can you name a few—the most forgotten bands or scenes according to you—from the past and the present?

That's really the hardest question to answer... there were rock bands everywhere in the '60s and there still are underground groups everywhere, even more than ever thanks to the internet and all the technological breakthroughs. The only scene I will mention is Zarmrock. First discovering the Zambian rock scene through file sharing back in 2005, and then watching labels like Now Again and Strawberry Rain (amongst others) reissue them, has been really exciting. But, honestly, get out a map, type a country name and a music genre into an internet

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above: me with Northern Haze below: me with Elligh from the Plutonium Lullaby, who were the first rock group from Igloodik. He is holding a photo of himself from 1973



Jerk Ward—Too Young to Thrash 12" Maxi-LP, 1982-84. Canada hardcore thrash. Twitch—self-titled EP, 1973. Canada proto-punk and doom. SpheX—Time/Leaving This Crazy City 7", 1976. Canada proto-punk and hard rock. Northern Haze—Sinnatung LP, 1985/2010. Canada Inuit doom rock and heavy metal. Disrags—3 LP, 1978-79. Canada all-women punk rock. Mexican Power Authority—Cold Natural Facts LP, 2010. Canada, my band, posthumous release. Triton Warrior—Satan's Train/Sealed in A Grave 7", 1972. Canada, Sabbath worship. Coming sooner or later: Twitch—Dark Years LP, 1974. Canada proto-doom and proto-punk. Twitch—Mess'n With the Bull (Gets the Horns)/Spunk 7", 1976. Canada glam punk and power pop.

And...more secrets!

search engine and find it for yourself. Even better, go travel to unpopular destinations. The world is yours to discover!

MRR: Jason, besides releasing records on your label, you've played in many bands. What was the first musical instrument that you played? How many bands have you been in? Talk about your current band, sound, lyrics, gigs, releases...

I started to play guitar in 1984 at age eleven and only briefly had lessons at age sixteen. Between Canada, Poland, Switzerland and the Czech Republic, I've been in approximately 30 groups doing vocals, guitar, bass, and drums, including B.A.T.T., Dementia, Tomorrows Hostility, Stick Farm, Dayworld, Pez, Crotch, Mexican Power Authority, Black Kronstadt, Enta / Lak, Seat Belt, Hermit, Third World Planet, Atak, Coconut Bulldozer, Automaton, Recaptation, Ruby Karinto. Most of the aforementioned released vinyl or cassettes, and recordings exist for all of them. I hope to make a compilation of them one day—perhaps someone reading would like to help release it!

My new group is Ruby Karinto. Two women, two men: Dameron on bass, Soma on electronics/oscillator, Jason on drums, Al doing vocals. We play no-wave R&B / trashy groove... Al is Japanese, so the lyrics are in two languages. Dameron and I played together in Seat Belt in 1992-94, Soma and I played in Recaptation more recently. Ruby Karinto will have a debut 7" out soon.

MRR: Mexican Power Authority was probably your most popular band. A few years ago you had a reunion. How did it go? What is Mexican Power Authority doing today?

Yes, we were a very prolific, often misunderstood group due to transcending many genres with stride. After a ten year break, Mexican Power Authority reformed in 2007 and did some big concerts, playing a "best of" our old material. It was a great success. We decided to make another chapter of music, so we discussed what kind of music we wanted to play. We LP is titled *Cold Natural Facts*. I am not interested in playing music with Mexican Power Authority again, so in my opinion, it's been finished since 2010...but there will be some releases. Perhaps one day someone will offer to reissue our discography.

MRR: You have been active in the punk / metal scene for almost 30 years. What

differences do you see nowadays?

I grew up in a rural suburb between a town and a city in an era when MTV began and punk and metal identities and subcultures were still clashing with each other. Crossover erupted in front of me as a melding of two subcultures. As a kid, the identity really engulfed my existence; it was my escapism and creative outlet. It was a phase and a stepping-stone, which to this day reminds me to not submit to mainstream commercial/corporate culture. I was in high school in the Pacific Northwest when grunge exploded and witnessed all the rich kids start to wear torn jeans and flannel coats. Green Day used to play in my friends' basements and play free concerts in city parks. Nowadays, the sounds of rebellion are now safely sweetened, repackaged, safe commodities. It used to be dangerous and alienating to like such groups. Never in my wildest dream would I have imagined punk rock, death metal, grindcore, hardcore, etc. to become so big.

MRR: What is your perception of punk today? Can you see the differences that have come about in the punk scene over the years?

I see men and women in their 40s and 50s who seem to have not grown past who they were when they were eighteen-years-old, at least that's my skeptical opinion, especially when I so often see them with a partner half their age. For most people, I think "punk" in 2014 is little more than a freak-fashion, but I do still appreciate that it represents rebellion more than any other subculture, and in some parts of the world it is still fresh and vital. It offers the opportunity for people to question their world and injustices, but can also be like a modern-day religion, and people too often forget that above all it means "no rules." I see young people who are looking for an alternative to mainstream culture yet being creative under a very different climate of resources; the internet has changed how people discover culture and how we network. Everything is at a person's fingertips through the safe and insular porthole of your lonely home computer. Our naivety and excitement of real-life experience can easily be replaced by online social networking, and I am no exception to this. It's made my life more insular too, because we all use computers. Nobody just shows up at your home unannounced or just randomly phones you anymore. It's all text messages and emails. What is punk in 2013-2014? Something different for everyone. I prefer the word "freak" over punk. Regarding image, in

Europe these days, there is mostly the generic crust-punk city warrior in all-black clothing with dreadlocks. Of course, looking beyond any stereotypes, there are some great people behind this image, but in my opinion, any stereotypical image should be provoked and challenged. As I've become older, I have learned that the most extreme looking people are often the biggest poseurs of all, and I do believe that some of the most intriguing and extraordinary people are those who may look totally normal. As for music, I am a passivist, preferring the first wave of any genre, whether it's '80s grind-core, funky '70s jazz or '60s garage. I think that in this time, the most spirited, fresh and new sounds are in the new scenes. For example, the sounds coming from Lebanon on T.A.M. 89's recent split 7" by Detox and Beirut Scum Society are phenomenal. In my opinion, if punk is to flourish in the Western world, it must constantly search, break and build itself over again. The punk scene must not surrender to a strict formula, but instead constantly provoke its peers. As soon as the sound is constrained, it has defeated itself.

MRR: What is your motivation after so many years, and what gives you the strength to continue?

I consider my archival releases to be therapeutic; a healthy outlet to be obsessive about details/history and build an intimate relationship with people based on their creative peak. Playing music is like a placebo/cure against the many compromises I find myself making to survive. Now I play drums, but singing is still the ultimate soul-satisfaction for me. My strength comes from love for humanity, culture, and those magic moments when you make someone a sensitive and sentimental person, and without love and happiness, life has no meaning to me. Generosity, being non-judgmental, hospitable, humorous and friendly, all go hand in hand when crossing cultures. Every time I step out of my comfort zone, these values are reaffirmed.

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